

September 26, 1959

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
September 24, 1959

Others present: Secretaries Herter, Dillon, Murphy, Merchant,
Mr. Davis, Mr. Hagerty, General Goodpaster

The group came in to discuss with the President matters expected to come up during his meeting with Mr. Khrushchev. The President commented that it will be very difficult to adhere to an agenda. He added that some say that Khrushchev is a master debater. In fact, he seems to be a skillful evader of tough questions.



Mr. Herter thought that the first evening at Camp David might be devoted to having Khrushchev talk about some of our misconceptions regarding communism. Perhaps he could "talk himself out" to a certain extent in this way. The first substantive questions would be Berlin and Germany, to be taken up the following day. Mr. Herter thought that the U. S. should take the offensive on these questions, bringing out that Khrushchev started the crisis, for which there was no need, and carried it forward by threats and pressure. He anticipated the Russians will stress the need for a peace treaty with the separate Germanies, and claim that their conclusion of a peace treaty will void our rights. Our first aim is to maintain our rights until reunification has been achieved. We expect to liquidate our rights in time, but not by their fiat.

The President said he wanted to find some standpoint from which to approach the whole discussion that would put Khrushchev "in a box." He could do this by asking Khrushchev how we might compete with respect to the values that people cherish other than the mere increase in industrial production. Suppose, for example, we call on them to accept the principle of peaceful resolution of differences. In Berlin they are operating with veiled threats of "or else." He did not think there was any point in wasting time listening to Khrushchev respond on the subject of freedom. Mr. Murphy suggested probing

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Khrushchev as to why he had adopted the ultimatum method of dealing with the German problem at this particular time. Mr. Herter thought that a moratorium could be a period of transition to a new status for the city of Berlin, but noted that the Germans would not agree until after their election late in 1960. Mr. Dillon said he had noted in the report of Gaitskell's talk with Khrushchev that the latter might agree to such a moratorium without implication that our rights would lapse at its end. The President thought the key point is that Khrushchev precipitated a crisis when he should have called for negotiations.

Mr. Herter next raised the question of the President's return trip to Russia. The President said that if the American people feel this meeting has been completely futile, and that Khrushchev recognized only his own arbitrary viewpoint, he did not see how he could go. Mr. Herter thought that the current meetings are more likely than not to end somewhat inconclusively. Mr. Dillon added that Khrushchev may save out some "give" for the President's return trip. Mr. Herter did not think the President should condition his return trip on Soviet agreement to a moratorium over Berlin, but did think that a summit meeting should be conditioned on that.

The President asked what State's evaluation was of Khrushchev's disarmament speech. Mr. Herter said it has obviously had substantial impact around the world. The small nations fear that the big powers might start a war, drawing them in. They were also attracted by his suggestion to use the funds freed from armaments for economic development around the world. He recalled that the President had put forward this suggestion six weeks ago. Mr. Khrushchev called for a step by step approach, extending controls as disarmament is extended.

Mr. Dillon suggested that the President consider making a speech on disarmament in the United Nations within the next few weeks. The President thought this might be a pretty good idea, providing him an opportunity to set out our plan.

The President thought that really the most promising line suggested so far is to try to get Khrushchev committed to negotiation as a

principle in the conduct of our relations. If he does this, we should be ready to tell him what we are prepared to do. Secretary Herter brought out that Khrushchev had omitted any consideration of any central or U N military force once national forces were reduced. The President said he has been trying to think of concrete examples for a possible step by step approach. We might for example abolish naval units having more than a certain operating range. Mr. Herter said that the Soviets had offered to reduce their conventional forces initially, cutting down to 1.7 million, but offer no way to verify these reductions. One idea his people have been examining is for the United Nations Disarmament Commission to send out a questionnaire for information to every nation asking what forces they require for their own internal security and what armament. Mr. Murphy commented that the existing forces are testimony to our lack of confidence in Soviet behavior, that we increased our forces greatly as the cold war became more severe. The President asked me to find out what was the strength of our armed forces at the end of December 1949. (I did so. The total was approximately 1.5 million.)

Regarding the exchange of atomic reactor information, the President said he viewed the project favorably so long as the whole thing was done through the IAEA.

The President next asked how the Chinese problem could be taken into consideration. If we are talking about disarmament and such subjects, he wondered how we could negotiate on controls in light of our rigid policy against any recognition of Red China. Mr. Herter said we do not wish to change our stand on Red China. They will not renounce the use of force in Taiwan nor will they release our prisoners. The President said he realized this but wondered how we can talk about general disarmament with them. Mr. Merchant said we have the same problem regarding the Federal Republic of Germany. It is realized, however, that such countries must come under the purview of a disarmament agreement even though they are not UN members. The President repeated that he wished we had a really fine first step in disarmament to offer -- one not involving our allies. Mr. Herter said that each type of weapon is so interwoven with others that it is hard to visualize what the President is seeking. Nuclear weapons now are so intimately mixed in with others that they could no longer be banned as a class.

The President said that there were reasons not to single out the nuclear weapon back in 1948, when we had a monopoly, but times have changed and if we could now really eliminate all atomic weapons we would not be too badly off. However, we can not do this without the most extreme and comprehensive inspection system. There is one possibility, however. Bombers and large missiles are discoverable because they are of substantial size.

The President thought Mr. Herter should talk to our Defense people. Where we once said our great strength advantage is nuclear, this is no longer true. If we could put down the sequence of steps we favor, some pattern might emerge. Mr. Murphy thought we could dust off the main lines of our 1957 proposals.

The President next noted that the Russians seemed to want a non-aggression pact. Mr. Herter referred to this as a political treaty. The President thought it was undesirable since it would cover the same ground as our U N commitment and thus detract from it. Also, it would imply some kind of special relationship between the United States and the USSR, and thus alarm our allies. The President noted the point concerning requests that the Russians cease to detain children and other relatives of people now in this country. He also thought we should press to obtain the additional space needed for our Embassy, and should be as tough on the Russians in this country as they are on us.

Regarding trade questions, the President asked whether it was agreed that we have no objection to selling any strategic goods for gold or other hard currency. The group indicated that we do not. Mr. Dillon said he would prepare an additional paragraph regarding trade for consideration for the communique.

Reverting to the question of his visit to Russia, the President said he would be agreeable if Mr. Khrushchev would make a statement that there would be no unilateral interference with our status in Berlin. This would then give us an opportunity to pursue other questions without a pistol at our head, in peaceful negotiation. He could then say he would go to Russia. It was thought the statement


should take the form that there would be no unilateral action attempting to prejudice our rights.

The President thought it might be desirable for him to go on TV for fifteen minutes or so just following Mr. Khrushchev's departure on Sunday, either to follow up on anything promising that came up in the talks or to correct any fallacious impression given by Mr. Khrushchev. Mr. Hagerty was confident we could get as much time as we might wish.

The President asked the State Department people to give some thought to the general line we want to follow in the discussions -- for example, do both nations really commit themselves to peaceful coexistence in the sense he had discussed.

The President mentioned that he was seeing Ambassador Lodge the following day, and indicated he would like to have Mr. Lodge at Camp David, in order not to waste the experience he had gained through his trip with Khrushchev.

Finally, the President discussed arrangements for Camp David, and attendance at the luncheon and dinner that he is planning.


A. J. Goodpaster
Brigadier General, USA

